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ABSTRACT

The Renewed Primary School project in Belgium is analyzed in this paper in terms of organizational response to a large-scale innovation, which is characterized by its multidimensionality, by the large number of participating schools, and by a complex support structure. Section 2 of the report presents an elaborated description of these characteristics. As local organizations, schools react differently to project implementation. From 1981-85, local organizational reactions were analyzed and four general types of local innovation policy emphases were distinguished: planning, interaction, risk avoidance, and cooptation. The nature of the local innovation policy influences the degree of implementation of project innovation goals. Data in section 3 illustrate the relationship between policy type and degree of implementation. The report analyzes the importance research has given to exploring the complex relationship between the local innovation policy and the degree of implementation. In the search to understand why some schools change successfully and others do not, recent attention is focusing on differences in local school context as an explanation for sporadic positive outcomes. Such examination is recommended to improve administrators' and researchers' understanding of conditions under which change initiatives succeed and fail. (CJH)

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THE RENEWED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BELGIUM
ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL INNOVATION POLICY

SYMPOSIUM : STUDIES OF KEY VARIABLES AFFECTING SCHOOL BASED CHANGE

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of the American Educational Research Association

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THE RENEWED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BELGIUM
ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL INNOVATION POLICY

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter the Renewed Primary School in Belgium (in the Dutch speaking part) is conceived as a large-scale innovation. A large-scale innovation is characterized by its multidimensionality and by its complex support structure. Local schools react differently when they have to implement a large-scale improvement project. The schools develop a local innovation policy. Four different types of local innovation policy have been distinguished. There is a relationship between the type of local innovation policy and the level of implementation.

1. Introduction

The innovation project "Renewed Primary School" (R.P.S.) started in September 1973. In 1972-'73 a national committee was established to develop a general innovation strategy. This strategy was considered as a general framework for the renewal of primary education. In this chapter, the description of the development and evaluation of the R.P.S. is limited to the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. The organisation and the innovation policy concerning the renewal of the primary school in the French speaking part (Wallonië) are different from the developments in Flanders (Nimal, Beumier & Tourneur, 1985).

The R.P.S. is a large-scale innovation project since it is characterized by multidimensionality, by a large number of participating schools and by a complex support structure. A more elaborated description of these characteristics is presented in section 2.

An analysis of these characteristics will make clear that those who are responsible for the national innovation policy take for granted the assumption that local schools are able to develop an adapted local innovation policy. There is the general expectation that schools, with a limited amount of added support, will reorganize the local situation in order to implement the general (and sometimes vague) aims of the innovation project.

However one can expect that schools will react differently to the broad brush strokes of a national innovation policy. In other words : the confrontation between the R.P.S. as a large-scale innovation project and

the particulars of each local school will result in different types of local innovation policy. So, from 1981 untill 1985 an analysis was made of these local "organizational" reactions. Out of this work four general types of local innovation policy were distinguished. In section 4 these four different types are described (for a preliminary exploration of local innovation policy see : Van den Berg & Vandenberghe, 1984; Vandenberghe, 1985a).

One can also expect that the nature and quality of the local innovation policy will influence the degree of implementation of the aims of the innovation (i.e. R.P.S.). In section 3 some data are presented that illustrate the observed relationship between policy type and degree of implementation.
The relationship between the local innovation policy and the degree of implementation as a general research question is important. More than a decade of concentrated research on educational change has made clear the complexity of the process by which innovations are created and then implemented. Some schools have been very successful. In other cases schools did not change at all. And as Wilson and Corbett point out : "Because of this, research attention has begun to focus on differences in local school context as a source for explanation for the sporadic positive outcomes. It is hoped that such examination will improve administrators' and researchers' understanding of the conditions under which change initiatives succeed and fail (Wilson & Corbett, 1983, p. 85, own italics).

2. The R.P.S. : a large-scale innovation

In this section three important features of a so-called large-scale innovation are described (for a more elaborated analysis see : Van den Berg & Vandenberghe, 1986). The innovation the R.P.S. is used to illustrate these dimensions.

2.1. Multidimensionality

A large-scale innovation project is characterised by its multidimensionality; a number of important objectives must be accomplished simultaneously and coherently. Each specific innovation, within the bundle, points to significant objectives. This striking fact for large-scale innovation projects lead to the observed practice at the school level of (justified) reduction. As a matter of fact, there are a number of indications which show that the local school and the teachers spontaneously set themselves

certain reductions. Thus we observed that many R.P.S. schools were only engaged with one or two innovations out of the whole bundle of innovations.

Taking into account this multidimensionality and the related multiplicity and multiformity of objectives, it is not surprising that participants on different levels often divergently emphasize different aspects of a large-scale project. For example external change facilitators often stress other goals than principals. And teachers pay more attention to consequences related to their class practice. These differences can result in a relatively wide gap between the original plans, the decisions in a local school and the actual implementation in a classroom. In other words, projects are filtered, stresses are laid and various choices lead to different realizations.

One consequence is that when investigating the implementation of large-scale projects, it is not to be expected that the schools and the teachers involved will give clear and consistent answers. The schools involved will probably emphasize different innovations and priorities in their planning. Even if the same innovation is included (for instance individualized reading instruction), it is likely take on very different configurations (Hall & Loucks, 1978).

The R.P.S. is indeed characterized by its multidimensionality. Local schools and teachers have to cope with a reform, which is in fact a bundle of innovations. The main goals of the R.P.S. are related to the following themes.

- Enhanced integration and interdependence between the kindergarten (2.5 years - 6 years) and the elementary school (6-12 years). Also an enhanced continuity between the different grades of the primary school.

- Increased and more effective individualization during the elementary grades, particularly in relation to reading and arithmetic. It's expected that teachers adapt their teaching activities taking into consideration differences among pupils.

- Enhanced contact and collaboration between classroom teachers and a remedial teacher, so that pupils with special problems in regular

classrooms will be worked with more effectively. There is an emphasis, also, on more collaboration among teachers and pupils from different

grades.

- Increased emphasis on the socio-emotional and creative development of the pupils. A more child-directed approach is one of the key ideas of the R.P.S.

- Better interdependence with resources in the community environment, in terms both of the students going out into the community to learn and of people from the community being used as resource-people on an ad-hoc basis within the school.

In summary : the main philosophical theme of this innovation-bundle is more interdependence among educational resources to support a more individualized, humanised, and effective response to pupils.

Local schools are confronted with this bundle of innovations. Taking into consideration the local situation and earlier experiences, schools will look for a local policy which will lead to a locally adapted realization of the R.P.S.

2.2. Generations of schools

It is customary to start a large-scale project with a limited number of schools. Before incorporating a great number of schools in the project, it is considered desirable to try out a number of starting-points (objectives) to test their realizability during an experimental period of two to three years, to develop materials on a limited scale, to experiment with co-operation, to look for adapted forms of external and internal facilitation, etc. These first-generation schools are often specially facilitated : the number of external change agents - and in certain cases also the number of internal facilitators - is sufficiently great to offer relatively intensive involvement with the teachers.

There is the general assumption that materials (for instance for individualized reading instruction) developed for and partly by the first generation of schools can be transferred easily to the second and subsequent generations. Typically it is assumed also that the change strategy planned and used with the first generation, will be useful for the other schools. Experience and some research show us, however, that these assumptions are precarious. For instance the adoption of materials does not produces always

the intended effects. The doctrine of transferability does not sufficiently take into account the fact that each participating school interprets the innovation and selects starting-points (objectives) in a manner adjusted to its concrete organisation and situation. Further schools tend to agree to a number of aspects without consciously aiming at all aspects of the large-scale project. Unfortunately, it is our observation, that this rather naive doctrine of transferability, still prevails in many countries.

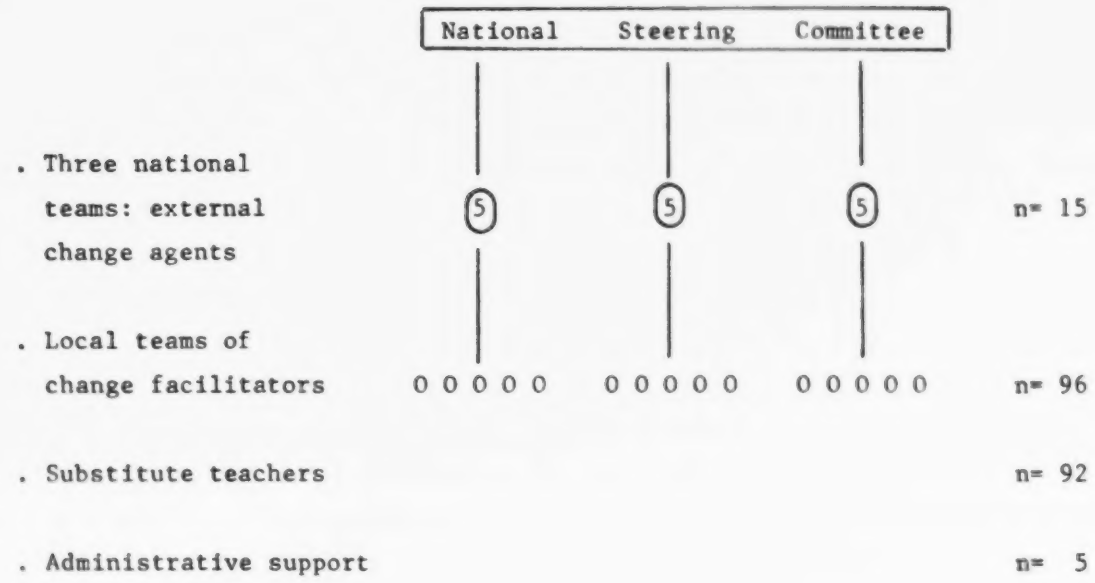
Briefly, this doctrine comes down to the fact that some policy people believe that everything can be settled a priori, that agreements can clearly be reached, and that specific results can be expected as time goes by. In other words, the proposed innovation will be adopted with high fidelity and will lead to clear cut results that are in line with the original aims.

A confounding factor for the R.P.S. was that the number of participating schools expanded very rapidly between 1973 and 1980 (1973 : 9 schools; 1976 : 25 schools; 1977 : 66 schools; 1980 : 227 schools).

2.3. A complex support structure

It is typical for a large-scale innovation that along with development of the innovation a complex support structure is created. At the national level as well as at the regional level, different types of change agents are involved. Figure 1 gives a general overview of the support structure that was created for the R.P.S. (school year 1983-'84). The role of these different change facilitators, however is not always clear. And it is not unusual to observe conflicts between an existing support system (e.g. inspectors for the primary schools) and the new support system created in the context of the large-scale innovation project.

Figure 1 : R.P.S. in Belgium - the external support structure



The National Steering Committee for the Renewal of Primary Education is responsible for the general development of the project. It is also responsible for a yearly evaluation report and for the formulation of recommendations to the Minister. The Steering Committee is made up of representatives from the major interest groups in primary education : the organizing bodies (state, catholic church, municipalities), the inspectorate, the parents, the unions, the universities, the teacher training colleges, and the psycho-medical-social centers.

The three national teams of external change agents (related to the three organizing bodies : state, catholic church, important municipalities) are responsible for the national co-ordination. They attend the monthly meetings of the National Steering Committee for discussions about the general aims of the project; they present long-term policy plans for the in-service training of principals and for the local change facilitators. Recently, they have become responsible for the organization of the in-service training of principals of R.P.S.-schools. The national teams also write a yearly evaluation report, which is discussed during one or two meetings of the National Steering Committee. It should be noted that most of the members of these national teams are former teachers.

During the first two years the change agents and the National Steering Committee, in co-operation with the staff of the 9 schools, parents, local inspectors and members of the psycho-medical-social centres, determined the future direction that would be important for the renewal of the primary school. This process-oriented democratic approach to educational change was unusual and unique for Belgium.

The members of the local teams (5 to 6 members; all of whom were former teachers) work with the faculty of 3 to 4 local schools. Mostly, they organize different kinds of in-service activities, have discussions with the principal about the way the general aims of the project can be implemented in the school, etc. In other words, the local change facilitators try to develop a school-focused implementation plan with each of their assigned schools.

During the school year the local change facilitators organize a workshop at least once a month for all teachers. That means that the staff can be involved in a discussion about the near future of their schools, about the activities which seem necessary for the implementation of the integration of the kindergarten and the elementary school; they also can evaluate past experiences, etc. During that workshop pupils stay at school; but the teachers are replaced by the so-called "mobile" teachers (substitute teachers). These teachers go from one school to another in order to give regular teachers the opportunity to attend the in- service workshops.

The support structure presented in Figure 1 is characteristic not only for the R.P.S. in Belgium, but also for large-scale projects in other countries (for more illustrations : see Van den Berg & Vandenberghe, 1986). The members of the National Steering Committee and the change agents at the national level are responsible for the general development of the project. They develop a long-term policy and an overall strategy. The National Steering Committee is especially important for advising the Minister of Education. Depoortere has made an analysis of the activities of the R.P.S. National Steering Committee (from 1972 until 1985) and came to the conclusion that several recommendations were accepted by the Minister (Depoortere, 1986).

The National Steering Committee is in fact an intermediate structure between the Minister and the local school. The members of the national teams collaborate with the local change facilitators. They are aware of the urgent problems. In many cases, they present solutions for these problems

to the National Steering Committee. And after some discussions the solutions are presented to the Minister who decides. As an example, the decision to involve substitute teachers and to organize workshops during teaching time were proposals from the National Steering Committee.

In looking at the support structure, it is also obvious that opportunities have been created for a school-focused support. In other words : a local team can support a school in the creation of a local innovation policy. Unfortunately until now we do not have enough observations or research data about the way members of the local team support local schools. The elaborated descriptions available for some schools, make clear that local teams support schools in very different ways. Some schools have developed a very fruitful collaboration; while other schools collaborate in a very formal way, which results in low impact.

2.4. Discussion

Why is it important to explore and to describe these characteristics ?
First of all these characteristics give a good description of the content and the nature of educational innovations in most of the West-European countries. The word "innovation" can have different meanings in different cultural settings.

Second, the complexity of a large-scale innovation leads to difficult questions and issues, in particular if one tries to evaluate the outcomes of a change effort. It is wrong to conceive a large-scale project as a clear and ongoing decisions process. Sometimes there is a lot of activities going on, without a clear conceptualization. Over the years the same goals are presented differently. It is not unusual to observe a shift in national priorities. As a consequence teachers do have a lot of questions about the meaning of the innovation. For instance, even after two years it was still unclear what the R.P.S. really was.

Third, it is also clear from this analysis that it is very difficult to assess the level of implementation at school and classroom levels. The general goals combined with the local reactions lead to very different configurations. Local schools, engaged in the R.P.S.-project, differ significantly in what and how they are doing.

And fourth, given this context and the complexity, implementation and institutionalization need to be conceptualized in appropriate ways. Concepts such as implementation and institutionalization become less clear and more complex when analyzing large-scale changes in educational settings. As was stated earlier schools engaged in the R.P.S.-project mostly choose one or two innovations out of the bundle of innovations. This first reduction is complemented by a second one : once the staff has choosen one specific innovation (e.g. individualized reading instruction) it is still necessary to develop specific teaching strategies and to choose among available teaching materials. From a research point of view, one can try to trace the implementation and institutionalization process. But it is typical for R.P.S.-schools that after a while the staff will add other innovative activities (e.g. organizing once every trimester a special meeting with parents). This refinement can disrupt the activities related to the first innovation or can lead to events which develop independently. In other words : the implementation and institutionalization of a large-scale project should not be conceived as a rational decision process through which two or three specific innovations are introduced in a planned and segmented way. A more appropriate image of a R.P.S.-school consists of one or two innovations which are elaborated during two or three years, surrounded by a lot of other activities which also belong to the "bundle of innovations". These last activities are less well planned, will differ from one year to another, will take on different configurations one year to another, may disappear after one year, etc...

3. Local innovation policy and level of implementation

3.1. Introduction

During the school year 1981-'82 101 teachers from 24 R.P.S.-schools were interviewed. The first main research question was based on the assumption that local schools, which are confronted with a large-scale innovation project (see characteristics) and with aims formulated in general (and vague) terms will develop an "organizational reaction". In other words : a local school will develop a "local innovation policy". The nature and the quality of this local innovation policy will differ from one school to another. There is also the assumption that it is possible to distinguish some general patterns in these overall organizational reactions. We call these general patterns types of local innovation policy.

One important question to ask is, to what extent is the type of local innovation policy determined by the principals' interventions, or by a second change facilitator, or by a change-facilitator team (see section 4) ?

The second main research question concerned the relationship between the type of local innovation policy and the degree of implementation of the general aims of the R.P.S.

All interviews with the staff of the 24 schools were audio-taped and written out in full. This led to an overwhelming number of pages with qualitative information. After several try-outs and especially using the experiences of the first and the second analyses of some interviews a detailed manual was developed which enabled the researchers to summarize the information in a standardized way using 86 "analysis tables". In these tables the information is summarized using some symbols, words and short phrases. These "reduced" data were used for the description of the local innovation policy and for the measurement of the level of implementation.

3.2. Local innovation policy or five important dimensions

A framework was developed based on these data in which five dimensions were distinguished. These dimensions summarize the operationalization of a local innovation policy. How these five dimensions were identified and "constructed" are explained next (3.2.1.). Then the four types of local innovation policies that were distinguished using the available data are described (3.2.2.).

3.2.1. Construction of five dimensions

The five dimensions can be described in a general way as follows :
Purposeful coordination of implementation activities via planning. Here we were interested in questions such as : is there a person(s) in the school who has a clear idea about the objectives the school wants to implement ? Can a person(s) who is responsible for vision-building be identified ? A second important issue related to this first dimension concerns the existence (or absence) of a series of activities which can be considered as indications of a more or less systematic planning of the implementation activities.

Structural information channels. In the data set there were clear indications of the existence (or absence) of activities by which all staff members were informed about the decisions made during meetings, about the inservice-activities for the whole staff or for some subgroups, about the planning of the next steps, about the results of internal evaluations, etc.

Professional relationships among the staff. Professional contacts among teachers (and teachers and the principal) are defined as regular (more or less planned) contacts during which several different professional issues and problems are discussed and solved. One result from these professional contacts is that most teachers know what is going on in the different classrooms.

School-specific character of the implementation(-proces). This was the most difficult dimension to define, but also the most interesting. The degree to which a school has adapted the (bundle of) innovation to the local situation is the general issue underlying this dimension. This general theme has been translated into the following more concrete questions : are the implementation activities based on a systematic diagnosis; do we find indications for the existence of a systematic and ongoing evaluation; do the evaluation results lead to adaptations; do the staff members have a clear idea and feeling about their (new) tasks; do the staff members have clear expectations about the role of the external change facilitators ?

Information activities during the mobilization stage. Here there are two activities of interest. First : what kind of activities were organized during the preparation year in order to inform the staff about the R.P.S. (activities such as : discussions during staff meetings; dissemination of printed materials; organization of a discussion with teachers from a R.P.S.; organization of a visit to a R.P.S., discussions with parents, etc...) ? Second were there activities that created possibilities for a cognitive elaboration and evaluation of the information ?

These five dimensions, were used to describe the operationalization of the local innovation policy in each description of the 24 schools. In order to enhance the possibility to compare (and to group) schools two sets of decisions were made before the actual analysis started. The first set of decisions concerned the relationship between the dimension and some specific summary analysis tables. In other words : the information necessary for the description of dimension 1 in a school can be found in

some specific tables. So, for each of the five dimensions the specific tables that contained the most relevant information were identified. The second set of decisions was related to the way the conclusions about the five dimensions should be formulated. The specifications of these rules (or decisions) led to standardized descriptions and conclusions about the dimension for each school.

The local innovation policy of each school was described, using the five dimensions as a background. These descriptions were then compared. From this comparison it soon became clear that it was possible to cluster schools into four groups. This clustering led to four types of local innovation policy. More information about this grouping procedure is found in the final report (January, 1985).

3.2.2. Four types of local innovation policy

The four types of local innovation policy are described in two different ways. First, a very concise description of the most typical characterictics of each type is presented. Second, the policy is presented in a graphic way using the five dimensions as the organizing framework. In this second presentation the innovation policy is related to the degree of implementation.

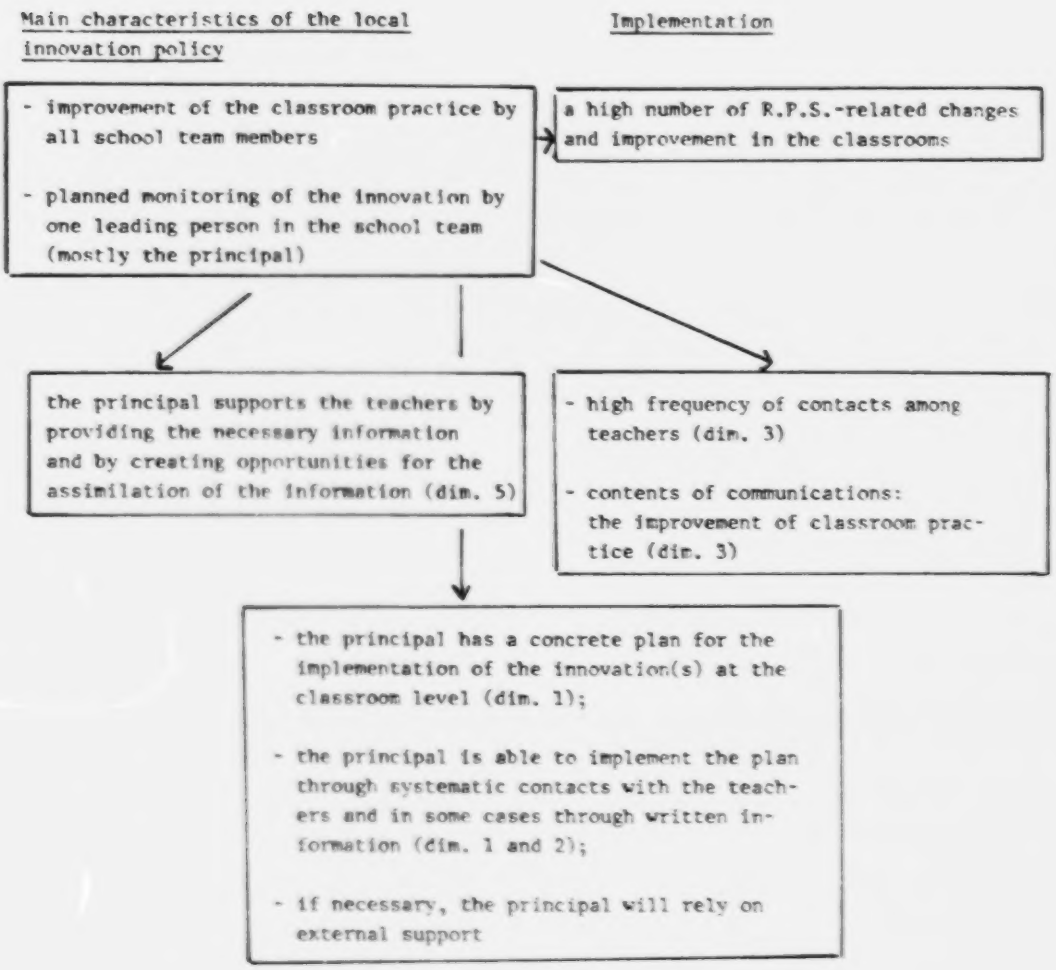
Local innovation policy characterized by PLANNING

Most of the efforts - of the principal as well as the teachers - are aimed at the implementation of innovations in the classroom with the purpose of improving existing teaching practice. These efforts are coordinated by means of a plan, wherein a number of specific indications for changes in teaching practice are pointed out. This policy leads to quite a lot of changes in classroom practice at relative short notice.

By passing on information about innovations and having frequent discussions about this information, the principal makes the teaching staff aware of the development s/he prefers. The principal communicates systematically and frequently with the teachers about the plan s/he has in mind and about the changes s/he would like to see implemented. Thus s/he succeeds in introducing his/her plan to the teachers and by doing so he makes clear his/her expectations about the needed changes in the classroom. This systematic communication occurs during staff meetings and during informal conversations, for instance during a classroom visit.

Local innovation policy characterized by PLANNING

(figure 7)


Main characteristics of the local innovation policy
Implementation
- improvement of the classroom practice by all school team members
- planned monitoring of the innovation by one leading person in the school team (mostly the principal)
a high number of R.P.S.-related changes and improvement in the classrooms
the principal supports the teachers by providing the necessary information and by creating opportunities for the assimilation of the information (dim. 5)
- high frequency of contacts among teachers (dim. 3)
- contents of communications: the improvement of classroom practice (dim. 3)
- the principal has a concrete plan for the implementation of the innovation(s) at the classroom level (dim. 1);
- the principal is able to implement the plan through systematic contacts with the teachers and in some cases through written information (dim. 1 and 2);
- if necessary, the principal will rely on external support

It often occurs that the plan and the agreements with respect to the implementation of changes are written down. Through these documents every staff member gets information about the evolution of the innovation process and about the concrete innovative attempts in the school. These documents can also be regarded as the preferred direction for the own classroom practice.

The teachers are frequently in touch with each other, not only at meetings organized by the principal, but also during other (informal) meetings. During these meetings they usually talk about improvement of classroom practice.

Whenever the principal thinks that an external change facilitator is an expert on a specific innovation topic, s/he invites him, in agreement with the staff.

Local innovation policy characterized by INTERACTION

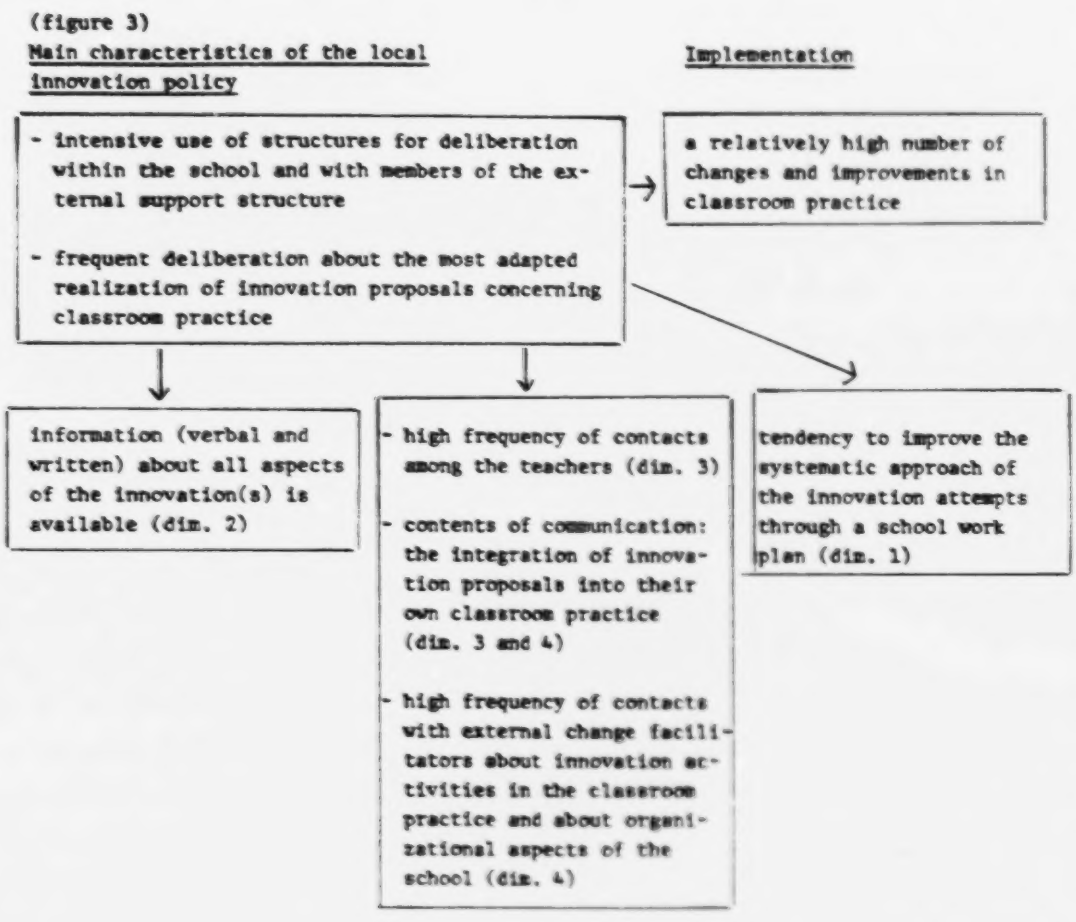
The way in which a number of schools react when confronted with an innovation bundle, i.e. the Renewed Primary School, can best be described as a process of systematic interaction. Frequent deliberation and consultations are observed in these schools, within the school team and between the team and external change facilitators. In order to provide systematic deliberation and to involve all school team members, these schools make intensive use of deliberation structures and written information channels. This way of exploring the innovation(s) leads in a relatively short time to many changes in classroom practice.

During these frequent meetings of school team members, either in subgroups, or with the whole staff, the attention is primarily drawn to the comparison of innovation propositions (goals as well as concrete activities) and their own concerns and possibilities. When a decision about a specific activity has been reached, the team will monitor the implementation through frequent evaluation sessions and will make the necessary adjustments.

External change facilitators follow the evolution very closely by means of frequent visits to the schools. They not only support the teachers in their effort to improve classroom practice, they offer school-focused support. In other words, changes are integrated at the classroom level, but also at the school level through frequent exchanges within and between the school staff and the external support structure.

Local innovation policy characterized by INTERACTION

(figure 3)


Main characteristics of the local innovation policy
Implementation
- intensive use of structures for deliberation within the school and with members of the external support structure
- frequent deliberation about the most adapted realization of innovation proposals concerning classroom practice
a relatively high number of changes and improvements in classroom practice
information (verbal and written) about all aspects of the innovation(s) is available (dim. 2)
- high frequency of contacts among the teachers (dim. 3)
- contents of communication: the integration of innovation proposals into their own classroom practice (dim. 3 and 4)
- high frequency of contacts with external change facilitators about innovation activities in the classroom practice and about organizational aspects of the school (dim. 4)
tendency to improve the systematic approach of the innovation attempts through a school work plan (dim. 1)

Local innovation policy characterized by RISK AVOIDANCE

The innovation policy of a number of schools can be concisely characterized as a slow, steady and careful approach in order to engage all team members in the innovation attempts. This policy leads - at least in the first year of the implementation phase - to only a few changes in the classroom practice.

The school team pays a lot of attention to the explicitation of these issues in the classroom and school life wherein teachers experience deficiencies. They search for an adapted answer to these problems in terms of innovation attempts that everybody considers as realizable in their own school situation. Typically there is a serious attempt to minimize the risks by involving everybody from the beginning in the search process and by keeping everybody well informed before taking concrete steps.

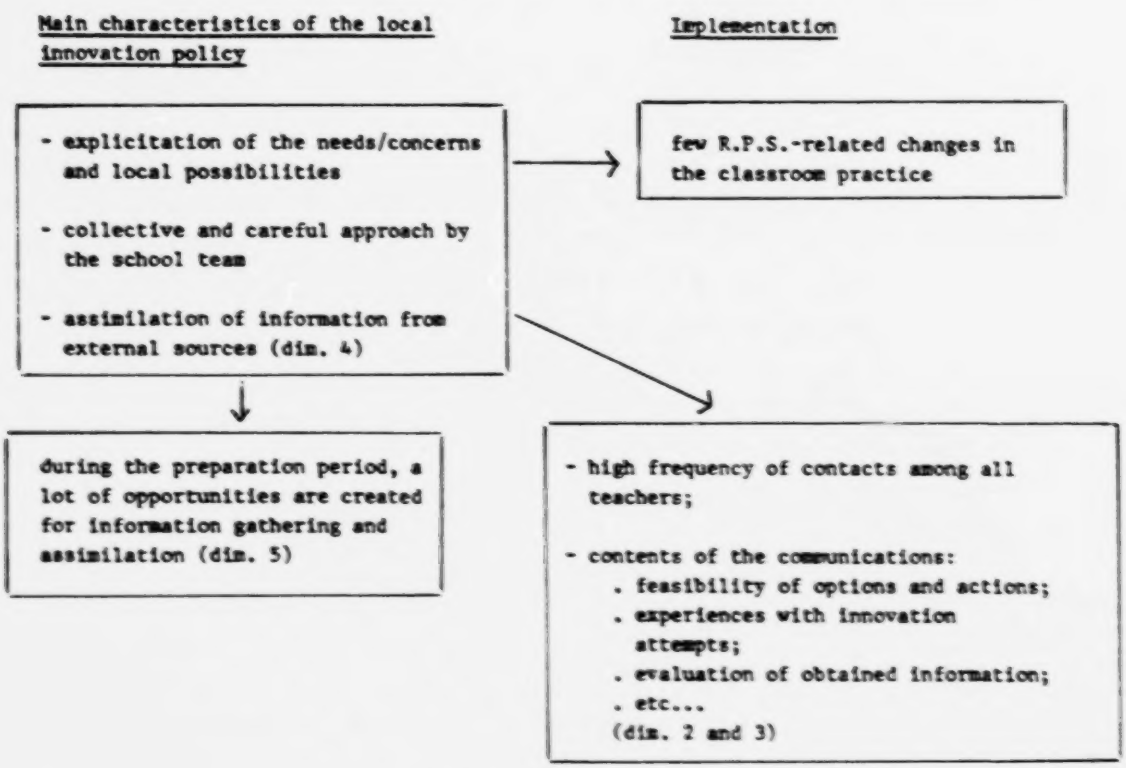
Such a process of intensive deliberation demands much time and supposes frequent contact among the school team members. They carefully discuss everything : which direction to follow and how to translate the official aims of the R.P.S. into concrete instructional activities taking into consideration their own history and possibilities. Also, after trying out a new activity, they exchange their experiences and decide in a collaborative way about the next steps to be taken.

A last characteristic of this type of local innovation policy is the assimilation of information coming from external sources. As they join the innovation project, the school begins searching for information and opens all doors offered by others. The assimilation of the information is done by all school team members with the purpose of creating an adapted and collectively accepted attitude toward the innovation(s). One risk of this activity is that sometimes the heavy emphasis on information retrieval leads to no changes as far as the teaching activities are concerned.

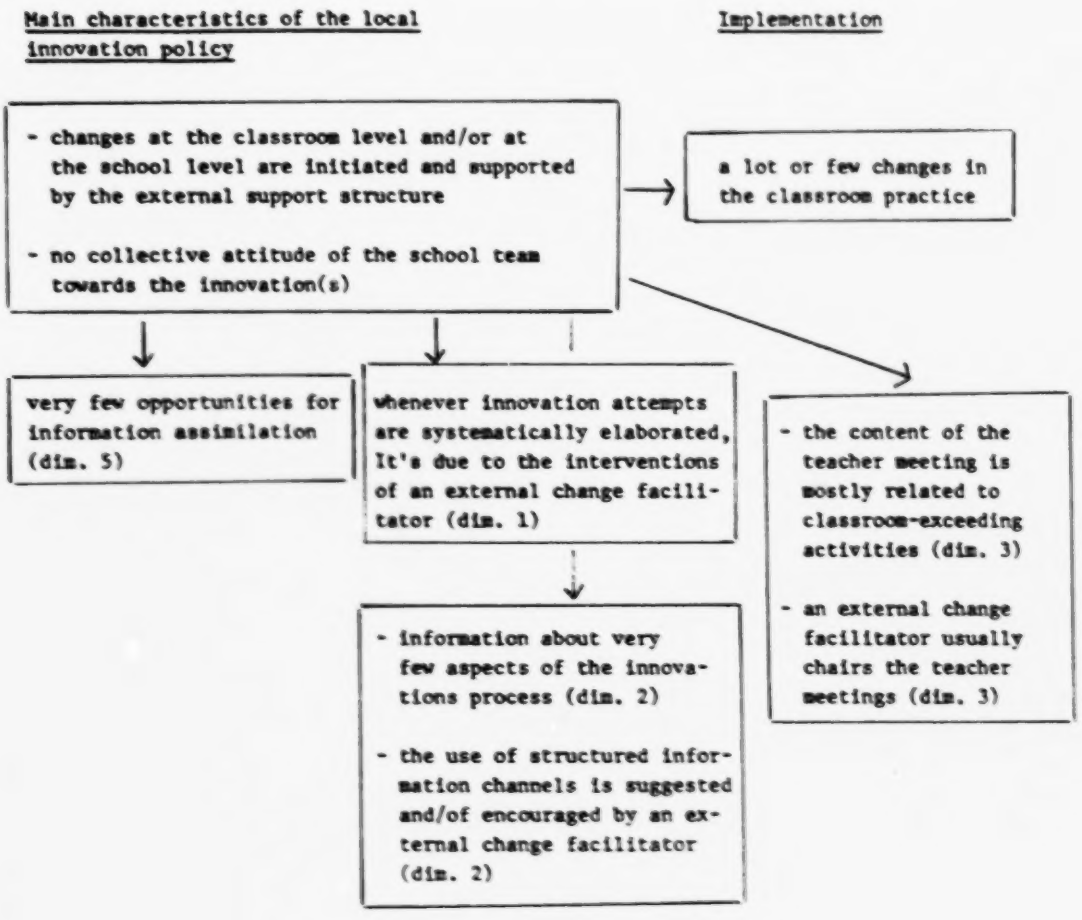
Local innovation policy characterized by COOPTATION

Most concrete changes in the classroom, as well as some changes in the internal organization of the school are primarily initiated and supported by an external change facilitator. As time goes on the school develops no collective attitude toward these changes or toward the innovation project. This kind of reaction to the innovation bundle can lead rather quickly, to many but small changes as well as to few changes in the classrooms.

(figure 4) Local innovation policy characterized by RISK AVOIDANCE


Main characteristics of the local innovation policy
Implementation
- explicitation of the needs/concerns and local possibilities
- collective and careful approach by the school team
- assimilation of information from external sources (dim. 4)
few R.P.S.-related changes in the classroom practice
during the preparation period, a lot of opportunities are created for information gathering and assimilation (dim. 5)
- high frequency of contacts among all teachers;
- contents of the communications:
. feasibility of options and actions;
. experiences with innovation attempts;
. evaluation of obtained information;
. etc...
(dim. 2 and 3)

(figure 5) Local innovation policy characterized by COOPTATION


Main characteristics of the local innovation policy
Implementation
- changes at the classroom level and/or at the school level are initiated and supported by the external support structure
- no collective attitude of the school team towards the innovation(s)
a lot or few changes in the classroom practice
very few opportunities for information assimilation (dim. 5)
whenever innovation attempts are systematically elaborated, It's due to the interventions of an external change facilitator (dim. 1)
- information about very few aspects of the innovations process (dim. 2)
- the use of structured information channels is suggested and/of encouraged by an external change facilitator (dim. 2)
- the content of the teacher meeting is mostly related to classroom-exceeding activities (dim. 3)
- an external change facilitator usually chairs the teacher meetings (dim. 3)

An external change facilitator strives to offer systematic support for innovation attempts within the school. He/she organizes and supports the definition of innovation objectives and the selection of concrete innovative attempts. Also the elaboration and implementation of these activities and the follow-up of these concrete realizations in the classroom is monitored by the external change facilitator.

The school team does not build up an organizational structure aimed at the stimulation of the local innovation process. The staff does not take the responsibility for their own development. The school team members discuss the innovation(s) and their innovative efforts very infrequently. They talk to each other only when it is really needed for the realization of a specific innovation, such as for classroom-exceeding activities, where scheduling is necessary. Other efforts or aspects of the innovation(s) are seldom discussed. For instance, information about the innovation is almost never a topic of conversation within the school team. The meetings of the school staff about the innovation process in their school are often chaired by or in presence of an external change facilitator.

Little attention is paid to keeping all school team members informed about the evolution of the innovation process. And only a small amount of information is disseminated through information structures. Communication is based on individual efforts to keep each other informed about part of their innovative activities, or they only give information about practical organizational issues. This can be the case even when the external facilitator frequently suggests and encourages the development of structured information channels.

3.3. Degree of implementation

As stated in the introduction, the second main research questions concerned the relationship between the types of local innovation policy and the degree of implementation of the general aims of the R.P.S.

To this point, how the interview data were analyzed and grouped in order to distinguish four different types of local innovation policy has been described. In this section, the second part of the research question will be addressed : how did we determine the degree of implementation ?
It is important to emphasize that the determination of the implementation was based on <u>interviews</u>. During these interviews an effort was made to

collect clear and useful information about the actual teaching activities in the classrooms.

First how information about the implementation of the aims of the R.P.S. was collected and how the degree of implementation was assessed will be explained. Second, the most important results will be presented.

3.3.1. Actual innovative activities and degree of implementation

In section 2.1. the "official" aims of the R.P.S. were presented. But, from the first interview, it became obvious that teachers do not talk about the R.P.S. using the official wording of the aims. They mostly talked about concrete teaching activities, perceived by them as typical for or as a result of the introduction of the R.P.S. in their schools. We decided to use these concrete answers for the determination of the implementation level.

During the analysis of the interviews we tried as far as possible to group all the teaching activities reported by the teachers under the headings of the official aims. In other words an attempt was made to reconcile the teaching activities described by the teachers to the "official" aims of the R.P.S. This ground rule made it possible to use almost all the activities described and discussed during the interview with the teachers .

A first inventory of all these teaching activities resulted in a long heterogeneous list. In order to grasp this diversity, typical activities were defined for each of the general aims. Each activity was defined very concretely. In other words, using the interview data on the one hand and taking into consideration the general aims of the R.P.S., a well defined analysis scheme was developed. This analysis scheme contains a general formulation of the aims, a definition of activities typical for each aim and also a list of analysis rules. This final set of rules was the result of several try-outs. The rules explain what kind of information (out of the interview) is important for the determination of the implementation level, how to organize the data, and especially how one can assess the degree of implementation.

Some examples will make clear the process of analysis as well as the assessment of the degree of implementation. In the manual developed for the

measurement of the implementation, the five official goals of the R.P.S. are defined by the research staff as follows :

- integration : activities aimed at the mitigation of the barriers between the different grades;
- individualized teaching : activities aimed at the implementation of teaching strategies which take into consideration differences among pupils;
- promotion of a school community : activities aimed at the promotion of collaboration among pupils from different grades;
- child-centered education : activities by which the pupils have the opportunity to influence the teaching-learning process;
- full development of all capabilities : activities aimed at the promotion of non-cognitive capabilities of every pupil.

As already indicated every aim has been further elaborated by indicating "typical activities". Thus, for the general aim "integration" two categories activities were identified : Category A : contacts among a teacher and pupils who will attend his/her class. And Category B : activities which have as a result information about pupils being transferred from one teacher to another.
In the manual, each category is illustrated by several examples.

Besides providing a general definition of the aims and clarification of the aims by listing typical activities (and typical illustrations), a rating system was developed to scale the degree of implementation. A four-points scale : 0, 1, 2, 3. was defined with each point being as concretely as possible. With these definitions and scale points it was possible to define an inter-scorer reliability. (The inter-scorer reliability was very high. Two researchers, for 264 scores, reached a 80 %-agreement on the first ratings.)

For example, for the aim "promotion of a school community" the following rating-scale was used :

3 : collaboration among pupils of different grades at least 14 times during two trimesters;
2 : collaboration among pupils of different grades at least 8 times during two trimesters;
1 : collaboration among pupils of different grades at least 4 times during two trimesters;
0 : no collaboration;
or : less than 4 times during two trimesters.

With this procedure, it was possible to asses the degree of implementation for every single teacher. Subsequently these assessments were aggregated for each school.

In a next step, a procedure was developed (fully described in the January-report) to form five groups of schools :

- group 1 : high implementation level for 4 or 5 aims (7 schools);
- group 2 : high implementation level for 3 aims (6 schools)
- group 3 : high implementation level for 2 aims (3 schools)
- group 4 : high implementation level for 1 aim (4 schools)
- group 5 : no aim implemented on a high level (4 schools)

"High level" means here that at least 25 % of the teachers had a score of "3" on the implementation scale and another 25 % of the teachers received a "2" or "1".

3.3.2. Implementation level and local innovation policy

As was already pointed out, one of the main research question concerned the relationship between the implementation level and the local innovation policy. Taking into consideration the elaboration of four types of local innovation policy, the question should be read as : What is the relationship between the implementation level and the type of local innovation policy.

The results are summarized in Figure 6.

Fig. 6 Type of local innovation policy by school and level of implementation (n= 18)*

Type Local Inn. Policy						
PLANNING	Schools	103**	105	106	305	306
	Implementation Group	1	1	1	1	3
INTERACTION	Schools	202	203	310		
	Implementation Group	2	3	1		
RISK AVOIDANCE	Schools	206	302	311	312	
	Implementation Group	5	4	4	5	
COOPTATION	Schools	101	201	204	205	307	308
	Implementation Group	1	2	5	2	5	4

* It was not possible to determine in an acceptable and valid way the type of local innovation policy for six schools. So they have been left out of this analysis.

** Identification number of school.

As is illustrated in Figure 6 there was a definite relationship between the type of local innovation policy and the degree of implementation. The degree of implementation is high in most of the schools that used the planning or the interaction-type of local innovation policy. The degree of implementation is low in the schools that used the risk avoidance-type. The relationship is less clear in the schools of the cooptation-type.

4. Literature

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